

Calvary Episcopal Church
Park Street, on west side of the
Village Green
Homer
Cortland County
New York

HABS No. NY-5435

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5435

CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Location: Park Street, on west side of the Village Green,
Homer, Cortland County, New York

Present Owner: The Rector, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of the
Calvary Church of Homer, New York

Present Occupant: The Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of the
Calvary Church of Homer, New York

Present Use: Religious services and functions.

Brief Statement
of Significance: Oldest public structure in the Village of Homer
still in use.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Local Church membership, Corporate title "The Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of Calvary Church of Homer, New York." Incorporated in January, 1905.
2. Date of erection: 1831-1832.
3. Architect: Noted in the Church Manual of 1932 as "Mr. Hagerman."
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Hiram Bliss, local carpenter.
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: The following description of the Church is taken from the "Gospel Messenger", the Church paper of the Diocese of New York. It is dated December 15, 1832:

"Calvary Church is built of wood, upon a basement story of stone. Its width is 40', its length including the tower 57½'. The basement room is, on the ground of the same dimensions as the Church, and nine feet high, furnishing a very suitable and convenient place for occasional meetings and exercises of the Sunday School. The style of architecture of the Church is that generally denominated the gothic. The tower is 18' wide, projects 2½', and is 71' in height. It is surmounted at the four corners by

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octagonal pyramids 17' high, which are connected with each other by an open gothic framework. The distance from the floor of the basement room to the moulding on the top of the pyramids on the tower is 98½'. The tower is divided by its pediment and the cornice of the bell deck into three compartments. The first, including the space below the pediment, is that which on a front view will soonest attract the eye of the spectator, and be regarded with the most delight. Of this space, a portion 8' wide and 24' high might be taken as one grand entrance. A double door, with gothic panels occupies the first square of 8', and separated from it only by the mouldings of the window sill is a gothic window 8' wide, 14' high, and divided by mullions into six sections.

"The second compartment of the tower, between the pediment and the bell deck, is ornamented by a clock face 7' in diameter. The upper compartment encloses on each of the four faces of the tower a green gothic blind 8' by 15' and divided by mullions. The three front windows and the blinds in the tower are crowned by gothic mouldings. The pediment and entablature on each side of it are surmounted by gothic battlements 4' high, with quadrangular pyramids at the two front corners of the roof, at the intersection of the roof with the tower, and at the feet of the pediment. In a front view of the building, this range of battlements and the gothic entrance with the large windows above, are the most attractive objects.

"The vestibule occupies the width of the tower and extends into the church 8'. There are no galleries, except one for the organ, which is directly above the vestibule, and extends across the eastern end of the buildings. The chancel, which is at the same end, is elevated 17" from the floor, has a front of 13' with circular corners, extends forward from the vestibule 14' and is surmounted with a railing of ornamental balusters 20" high. The desk and pulpit (the latter of which is but three feet from the chancel floor) correspond in width and appearance, and are of plain work, like the front of the gallery. The panels being small and in bold relief, present a specimen of rich neatness. The pulpit rests on heavy pedestals, its square corners project, and access to it is from within the chancel by a winding flight of stairs. The desk and pulpit are dressed in blue cloth, having a border of gold lace. These dressings, the chancel cushions of blue marine, the carpeting of the chancel, and the lamps have all been obtained by the zealous exertions of the ladies of the

congregation, at an expense of upwards of an hundred dollars. The expense of the entire building has been about \$3,300 and it is a most gratifying circumstance that the subscriptions and sale of the pews have left the vestry unburdened by debt. The church thus happily completed was opened for divine worship for the first time, on Advent Sunday, December 2." (From the "Parish Record - the Centennial Year - 1931-1932 of the Calvary Episcopal Church of Homer, New York.")

6. Alterations and additions: Since construction of the church there have been several periods of disuse (a total of 26 years), that have resulted in deterioration, particularly of the tower. In 1890, three feet in height was removed from the foundation wall and the building lowered accordingly. The gothic battlement and railing was removed from the pediment of the roof and the cornice continued across the face of the tower. The roof was shingled with slate and the stained glass windows were installed. Inside, a wooden gothic ceiling was installed and the chancel removed from the east end of the church to the west end, where the rear of the church was extended to receive its depth. New pews (of oak) were installed. The bell was re-cast and a new frame supplied.

The following accounts of the remodeling appeared in the Syracuse Standard newspaper:

"June 28, 1890 - Homer. The work of remodeling the old Episcopal Church has begun. Zelora Hoag has the contract for the work."

"July 4, 1890 - Work of the remodeling of Calvary Church was begun Monday. The basement so long used for a town hall is to be done away with and the church lowered four feet. An addition 38' x 8' will be built on the west end of the church for a sanctuary, vestry room and organ loft. The auditorium will have an arched ceiling of Georgia pine, the side walls being replastered and decorated. Stained glass windows will replace the old ones, and new seats, furniture and carpets will make a handsome interior. The exterior will be repaired and repainted in tasty colors. The tower will not be changed, but will be put in a more presentable shape; and the whole work when completed will be an addition to the looks of the park and village. The church will be finished in about two months."

"July 18, 1890 - The corner stone of Calvary Church was

relaid Monday evening with appropriate services. NY, 12-HOM
Rev. James A. Robinson, a former rector of Grace Church, Cortland, Rev. Mr. Clark present rector of Grace Church, and George F. Clover, lay reader in charge of Calvary parish, Homer, took part. A large gathering was present. In the box, which was placed under the corner-stone, were deposited copies of The Gospel Messenger, The Earnest Worker, a photograph of Rt. Rev. F. D. Huntington, bishop of the diocese, a leaflet containing the service used at the relaying, a history of the church since its organization in about 1810, together with a short sketch of the society since its reorganization in June, 1889."

"October 24, 1890 - Syracuse parties are decorating and frescoing Calvary Episcopal Church. The new furnace, organ, seats and carpets have arrived and when the windows come everything will be in readiness for opening. The interior will be very handsome."

"November 27, 1890 - The stained glass windows of the Episcopal Church have arrived and are in position. The final touches to the interior will now be finished up."

December 1, 1890 - Addison Northrup has just finished the handsome altar for the remodeled Episcopal church. The altar is of solid oak, the weight being between 600 and 700 pounds, and finished in elegant style. It is covered with emblematic designs and will be a handsome addition to the church furniture. A bishop's chair and priest's chair, both of solid oak are in progress of completion by Mr. Northrup for this church."

"December 5, 1890 - To be rededicated on December 10th."

In 1931-1932, more repair was needed. The rector and a local carpenter re-designed the tower and did the work. The adjoining parish house was erected in 1916, the gift of a parishioner.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The church membership does not hold title to the land on which the church stands. This land, the Village Green, is owned by the First Religious Society of Homer, Inc. which granted the Episcopal Society permission to erect their church upon it. Born in Homer, Andrew D. White, co-founder and first president of Cornell University, was baptised in this church June 7, 1835. During its existence, the Calvary Church has been in three dioceses: first, the Diocese of New York, then the Diocese of Western New York (formed 1838), and in 1868, the Diocese of Central New York, thus reflecting the settlement across the State. On the 18th of March, 1833,

it was resolved by the Vestry of Calvary Church to establish a library to be known as "The Parish Library of Calvary Church". It was stated in the by-laws that any person could for the sum of one dollar become the Proprietor of one share in the Library and therefore entitled to the right of drawing books subject to the Library regulations. These regulations are outlined in the Eleven By-Laws adopted by the Vestry.

For over fifty years prior to 1890, the basement of the church served as a hall for official meetings of the village and also the town of Homer. In his early years as a Bandmaster, Patsy Conway conducted rehearsals of the Homer Band in this hall.

G. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: See bibliography.

2. Bibliography:

"The Parish Record - The Centennial Year 1931-1932 (of the) Calvary Episcopal Church - Homer, N. Y." The Rev. Harry B. Meyer, B.A., S.T.B., Homer, New York. Few copies are available. The one used for preparation of HABS material was loaned by Mr. John Livingston, Little York, New York, Senior Warden of the Church.

"Records of Calvary Church 1831-1876", the original volume at the Church and a copy of same at the Cortland County Historical Society.

Prepared by R. Curtis Harris
Cortland County
Historical Society
June, 1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A small gothic revival church with "Batty Langley Gothic" details.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Dimensions: One story, three bays.
2. Foundations: Local flat field stone, laid dry below

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grade line and with mortar above.

3. Wall construction: Wood clapboards exposed 6" on sides and rear. Front side of 6" matched boards, laid horizontally, all painted white.
4. Structural system: Posts, girts and planked bertical sheathing. Hand-hewn beams and sawed 2" x 10" joists.
5. Porches, stoops: Front stoop and steps of flagstone.
6. Chimneys: One chimney of brick.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Front entrance 8' x 8', double doors; one side door for entry to parish hall constructed in 1916.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Three windows on each side and two in front plus of gothic design, openings 5' x 14'-6". No shutters. Leaded colored glass, small panes in various geometric designs.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, covered with asbestos cement shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Simple box cornice above narrow plain freize; pilaster strips at corners.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Present tower, approximately 12' square above plate line; pilaster strips at cornices; crenalated roofline.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Basilica plan with chancel at west end.
2. Stairways: Enclosed in vestibule (north end) to choir loft over vestibule; sixteen 7" risers.
3. Flooring: Modern 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " face oak.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are now plastered; ceiling is beaded stock, painted.
5. Doorways and doors: From south transept into room adjacent to chancel; door in south wall leading to exterior.

6. Decorative features and trim: Moulded panel wainscot in chancel.
7. Lighting: Electric.
8. Heating: Central, hot air.

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D. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation: Faces nearly due east, and set back from the Main Street about 200' or more on the Village Green.
2. Outbuildings: Small parish hall, attached by a short corridor to north side of the church.
3. Landscaping and walks: Since the building is actually sited on the Village Green, no landscaping of consequence exists about the building. The Green, however, is shaded and has an attractive expanse of well-kept lawn.

Prepared by R. Curtis Harris
Cortland County
Historical Society
May, 1965

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation of structures in the Southern Tier of New York State, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Cortland County Historical Society and the Valley Development Foundation, Inc.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The historical and architectural material was prepared in 1965 by R. Curtis Harris, of the Cortland County Historical Society. Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher in April, 1966. The measured drawings were delineated by Larry D. Nichols in October, 1966. The project was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Constance Werner Ramirez, July, 1974.